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ECHOES OF LONG AGO

A. H. GUNNETT



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ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

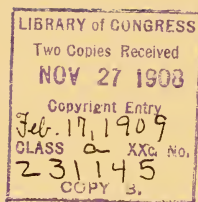
ECHOES
OF
LONG AGO.

By
A. H. GUNNETT.



1908
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ECHOES OF LONG AGO

Foreword.

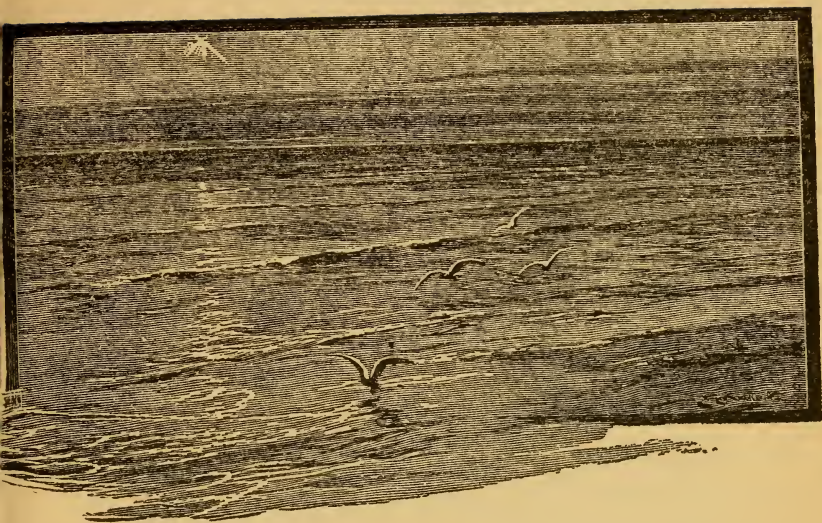
THE eagle spreads an ample wing, and flings from the clouds his regal call; but the song of the little familiar bird that sits in the bush by the window, touches the heart as no voice of eagle can. So this little poem with its humble theme can awake the soul to tenderness, when a more pretentious volume would fail. It sings of home; the old home. Sings in a melody and speech we all understand. Sings a true song; there is nothing fanciful; the singer merely lifts the curtain of the years and makes us see again the pictures that lie back in the memory of so many of us. It is all so real, so natural, that listening and looking, we become children again. We throw aside the burden of the years; we are ready for the bumble bee battle again; and the stings — well, they are nothing to some of the stings we have found in life's later battles. Once more we wade ankle deep in the Peppermint along the old creek; once more we eat without a dessert of dyspepsia tablets; once more, at nightfall, throw ourselves down

by the old fireplace while the apples and hickory nuts pass around. And then we come back to the present, refreshed, as though our lips had been moistened with at least the spray, from the "fountain of youth."

To the younger generation this poem may seem like a fairy tale. But it is real; and young life should know it; for in just such lowly scenes God shaped the lives of the true nobility of America, the men and women of country and village upon whose foundation rests the superstructure of modern civilization. The stories of old Greece and Rome may be more classic, but they are not more important for our youth to know than these simple annals of early American days.

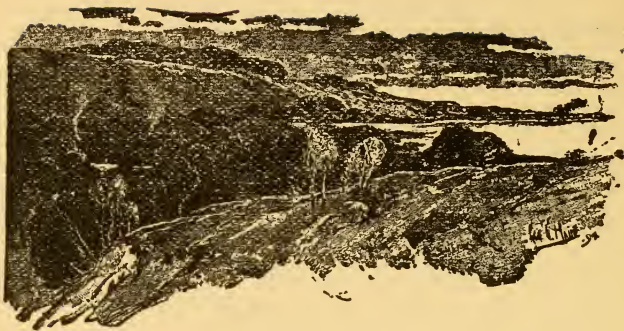
But aside from its subject, we believe this poem has merit sufficient to give it honorable place among the epics of early American rural life.

D. F. HOWE,
Pastor, West Lake M. E. Church.
Los Angeles, Cal.



Preface.

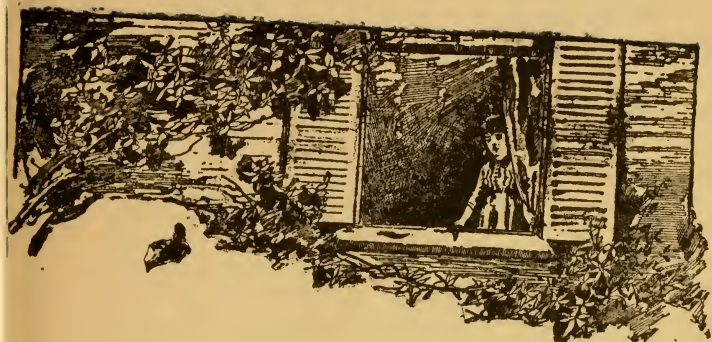
Alone beside the sundown sea
I sit absorbed in reverie;
And while I watch the breakers play
My thoughts take wings and fly away,
Back to my dear old childhood home.
And o'er its hills and fields I roam.
While on the sandy beach I lie,
Those youthful scenes go trooping by;



THE WINDING PATH CALLED CATTLE TRAIL.

And living o'er those bygone years,
My fading eyes oft fill with tears.
Not one is left to greet me there,
Of those who once were young and fair
I scarce can realize 'tis true,
That fifty years mark me and you.
Oh, could I see that place once more,
And find all things just as of yore!
Alas! alas! this cannot be,
The place has changed as well as we.
Our cabin-home upon the hill,
The water-wheel and old grist mill;
The crooked fence with lapping rail,

And winding path called cattle trail, —
Not e'en a trace of these is found,
And strangers now possess the ground.
The gushing spring with mossy brink,
Where we when thirsty came to drink,
Is prisoner now in iron case,
And people call it "Watering Place."
The music of that pebbly rill
Like David's harp is hushed and still;
The forests, too, are fallen low,
Like our playmates of long ago.
Oh, take me back to that old farm
Which holds for me the sweetest charm!
No answer comes to this, my prayer,
Excepting this: "Not there, not there."



Echoes of Long Ago.

Some echoes are here of the long ago
Rolling backward to youth in a rhythmic flow.
As I write these lines of the days gone by,
Sometimes I must laugh and sometimes must
cry.

How changed are the scenes where'er I go!
No place is familiar; no face that I know.
A few of the living these years can recall;
When they pass away the curtain will fall.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



A FIREPLACE WAS OUR COOKING STOVE,

Our birthland was the Keystone State.
But not in days of fashion late.
A two-room log-house was our home,
And this for us gave ample room.
Our household group just counted eight:
This number then was not called great.
A fireplace was our cooking-stove,
And seats of chairs with splits were wove.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



A tin pan on a rock at hand
Then served us well for toilet stand.
No jets of gas for light o'erhead,
But mother's tallow dips instead.
Swift, gushing from the hillside near,
Our water flowed, cool, sweet and clear,
Instead of pipes, in wooden pail
We *packed* it down the stony trail.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



The best of milk from "Spot" and "Star"
Was emptied into crock and jar.
When these were placed in spring-house
stream
'Twas then we had the richest cream.
In grape-vine shade we worked the dash,
And churned the milk and made it splash.
When butter came our task was done,
Then off we ran to have our fun.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

Those happy times of childhood's years
Were without cares and free from fears;
And yet we had so much to do,
I wonder how we e'er got through.
We fed the fowls, the pigs, and sheep,
And brought the cows; rocked babe to sleep,
Worked in the garden, woods, and field,
And farm tools early learned to wield.



We gathered eggs, cut wood and weeds,
And helped supply the family needs.
Then off to school two miles away, —
Back home again at close of day.
When five years came at last to me
We went to school, the brothers three.
My first day at the place called school
I felt the sting of master's rule.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



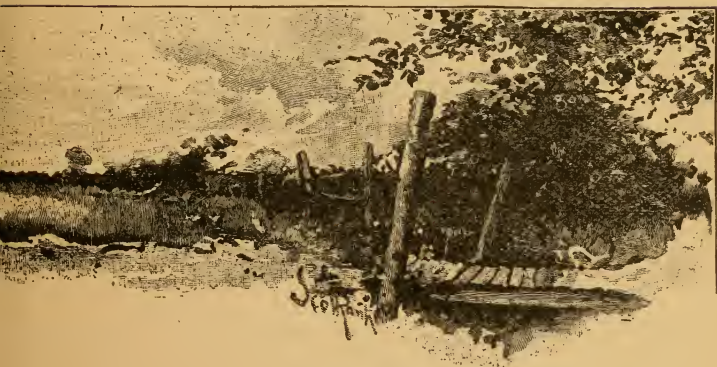
He said: "Show me the letter C."
I cried and said: "Show it to me."
"You little scamp; don't be too smart."
His blows and words hurt hand and heart.
This was my last for twelve months more.
The new school-miss I did adore.
That red school-house in mem'ry clear,
With furniture so odd and queer;

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

The seats were slabs set up on pegs,
By far too high for our short legs.
Long boards were propped against the wall,
And these made desks for pupils tall.
For little tots, how great the change
Along these backless seats to range.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

The passing days the season brought,
Each sep'rate one with pleasure fraught.
In spring we made the elder spile,
Worked sugar camp in merry style.
We tapped the trees with laugh and shout,
And set the troughs we'd hollowed out.
The sap was boiled to syrup sweet,
And taffy made to pull and eat.
Then came the young of flock and herd,
Of chicken, duck and nestling bird.



ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

The turkey to her nest we traced,
Then back through brush and field we raced.
The woods in Spring on that old farm
Were crowded full with many a charm.
The bulbs and seeds sent up their shoots,
And flowers came up from living roots;
The dogwood, service, laurel bloom,
Were beauties rare and first to come.

The wintergreen and mosses fine
A carpet made beneath the pine.
Along the creek the lilies grew,
Wild violets and the ivy, too.
As sport for boys naught else could beat
To wade the stream with naked feet.

When summer came 'twas harvest day,
For men 'twas work, for boys 'twas play.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



Men rake and bind and cradle swing,
While boys in jugs the water bring.
The bob-white's nest in stubble found,
And bush with berries bent to ground.
Young rabbits ran when grain did fall, —
A race and shout for one and all.
The sickle used for fallen grain,
And threshing done by might and main.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



The sheaves were spread on floor of rails,
Grain pounded out by swing of flails.
The fishing-place, and swimming-hole,
The crawfish-pinch, and mussel-shoal,
And nettle's sting, mosquito's bite
Were in our thoughts both day and night.

The Autumn brought her fruit and grain
From orchard, patch, and wood, and plain;

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



The apple, walnut, hickory bright
Were stored away for winter's night.
The shucking corn, — for boys not nice,
But oh! what fun with rats and mice.
The cider made, the pigs were killed,
The sausage ground, the cases filled;
The head-cheese spiced, lard rendered out,
And barrel fill'd with sauerkraut.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



WHILE BOYS IN JUG THE WATER BRING.

When winter came with snow and storm
We saw full many a ghostly form.
The golden leaves of Autumn fell,
And water into ice did swell.
The birds went south, except a few
And these around our windows flew.
Soon Christmas came with gifts for all,
From baby wee to parents tall.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



While parents planned, the children played;
They cracked their nuts and castles made.
If came a thaw or melting snow
At night we did a-hunting go.
Our Tyler dog, true as the moon,
One winter killed two score of coon.
Sometimes we caught some 'possums too,
One night a skunk, and then "pew, pew."

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

The dainties gathered in the woods
Were better far than best canned goods.
The huckleberry and blackhaw,
Raspberry, black, and the paw-paw,
Both leaf and fruits of wintergreen,
Black currants, grapes the best e'er seen,
Wild cherries and the service red,
Strawberries wild just fresh from bed,
Gooseberries and the red wild plum,
Each one in season they did come,
From early Spring till Autumn's call,
Yes, even till the snow did fall.
And then there were those barks so nice
Of sassafras, and birch, and spice,
And early shoots of many kinds,
And dainty curls of wild grape vines;

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

And then the nuts as they would fall
From walnut, beech, or hick'ry tall,
The butternut and chestnut, too,
And hazel in our forest grew.
Our chewing gum, dried pitch of pine,
From hick'ry log oozed taffy fine.
So much to eat and all so good,
We could almost live in the wood.
Alas! these all in their wild state
Can scarce be found for present plate.

As boys, you know, we had to fight;
And oft came out in sorry plight;
The war declar'd when nest we'd see
Of yellow-jacket or bumble-bee.
Our dog as brave as ever found,
Against these foes stood not his ground.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

With whine and whelp, tucked-tail he'd run,—
For him no joke, for us 'twas fun.
With brush and hats we thrashed about,
As from their forts our foes flew out.
Or if we found them all at rest,
With spring and leap we stamped the nest.

To us the chiefest prize of all
Was when we took the hornet's ball;
They fought the fiercest, stung the worst,
And struck us with torpedo thrust.
Defeat by these was no disgrace,
Though bunged and swelled in head and
face,
The grit and skill to plug the hole,
And cut the limb were no mean role.
To pull the plug and run like deer,
With forty hornets in your rear,

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

In boyish minds, not Perry's fleet
Was half so fierce a foe to meet.
Poor Mother's grief: "Just look at that,
All torn to shreds, your new straw hat."
To fit wild boys for life's combats
Costs many suits, and shoes and hats.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



POOR MOTHER'S GRIEF: "JUST LOOK AT THAT."

Did you e'er sleep on feather bed?
Just like the pillows for your head?
I've been right there and helped to pick
The stuff that fills the feather-tick.
Oh, how I would just like to see
Mother with a goose on her knee.
To keep the goose from doing harm,
She stretched its neck round under arm;
One hand she used its legs to hold,
The other's work need not be told.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



I'VE BEEN RIGHT THERE AND HELPED TO PICK
THE STUFF THAT FILLS THE FEATHER TICK.

Poor' goose would sometimes squawk and
flop,
But soon she found she'd better stop.
Whenever one would stray away
To make a nest in which to lay —
While mother goose was working hard,
The gander stood as body-guard.
If seen in brook, or field, or lake,
You ne'er would think they'd trouble make.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



BUT IF YOU DARED TO CROSS THEIR PATH
YOU'D ROUSE IN THEM THE FIERCEST WRATH.

But if you dared to cross their path,
You'd rouse in them the fiercest wrath.
With taunting hiss and shake of wing,
They would their bold defiance fling.
And then we knew the fight was on,
Unless we out of reach would run.
We buckled in, just bet your life, —
'Twas no sham fight to win that strife.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

With savage bite and wing they fought,
Upon our legs the bruises brought.
This furious fight we could not check
Unless we caught him by the neck.
Then round and round our foe we'd whirl
And with our might to ground we'd hurl.
And then we knew we'd won the fight,
For up he got and took to flight.
When he to his companions came,
They screamed as if he'd won the game.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

“Us boys” were left alone one day —
We thought we’d change our form of play.
A small yoke made as oxen use,
And for our team two cats we choose;
First one would leap, then both would squall,
Then up a tree, cats, yoke and all.
We thought young turkeys, too, should swim,
And sure they could the surface skim;
Their feathers soon with water filled,
Before we thought, they’re almost killed.
We were so full of childish glee,
We never thought of cruelty.
But our day’s sport took wings for flight,
When home our parents came at night.
We did not dare to tell a yarn;
With strap they marched us to the barn.
The cats soon laid their yoke aside,
The turkeys’ feathers soon were dried.
Yet we remember to this day
The price we paid for that day’s play.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



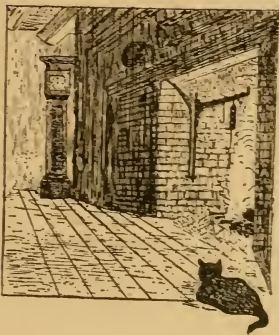
WE OFTEN TRIED TO FIND THE SPOT.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

The sunrise diamonds on the green
Are upward thrown by hands unseen;
And thus is made the rainbow true;
By sunbeams bright and drops of dew.
Oft we were told that if we found
The spot where this bow touched the ground,
There we would find rich bags of gold
And many gems of wealth untold.
We often tried to find the spot,
But neither that, nor riches got.

Another tale was also told
Which we soon found a "fable old."
"All birds you'll catch, and without fail,
If you put salt upon the tail."
The wild goose chase we did not mind,
But to our sorrow we did find
That many stories told to youth
Are quite a distance from the truth.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



AND MADE US TEA IN STEWING POT.

If we got sick our parents knew
Exactly what was best to do.
They'd soak our feet in water hot,
And make us tea in stewing pot.
Horse-radish leaves or pounded root
Would make a blister just to suit.
If babe were sick the remedy
That never failed was catnip tea.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

If we should have the sick headache,
Some boneset tea they made us take.
Or if we lost our appetite
Some rhubarb root fixed that all right.
That bitter stuff we did despise,
But its leaf-stock was fine for pies.
If cow got sick or looked forlorn,
We split her tail and bored her horn.
Old Phebe, our faithful family nag,
Though stiff in limb would never lag.
If she did not keep fat and sleek,
The lancet in her neck would speak.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

We raced the chipmunk forth and back,
Along the fence we hit a whack;
This wakes a shout and spirit gives
To laziest boy that ever lives.
The time we spent in this fine sport,
Made tardy marks and bad report.
The teacher's name we have forgot,
And much we learned has gone to naught.
But those brisk runs along the fence
Will stay with us till we go hence.

We'll ne'er forget those nightly sounds
With which grove, wood, and field abounds.
The cricket's chirp, the screech owl's trill,
The oft-repeated whippoorwill.
A thousand insects, "Katydid,"
In darkness screeched, in daylight hid.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



BAREFOOT BOY.

When larger owls called "hoo-hoo-hoot."
Our hair stood straight from tip to root.

The barefoot boy has pleasures sweet,
But he the consequence must meet
His legs and feet will crack and smart,
And from the cracks the blood will start.
The raking, thorny briar vine
Around his ankles will entwine.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

And in the race for little quail,
He stubs his toe or looses nail:
The aching, throbbing pain he'll feel,
Which comes from stonebruise on the heel;
The prick of splinter, nail or thorn,
Most make him wish he'd ne'er been born.
But all these he can bravely meet
Till night when he must wash his feet.
But mother's touch with salve and balm
Stops pain and tears, brings sleep and calm.



ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

Much work was done by pioneer,
In door and out, through all the year.
Each one was taught to do his part
In what would now be called an art.
While mother sat at spinning-wheel,
We made the skein by turn of reel,
Cut, sewed and balled the carpet rag,
And shelled the corn to fill the bag.
Our mother made our pants and coats,
And father mended shoes and boots.

She knit our socks and comforts, too,
While we would oft the milling do.
A piece of tin with nail holes filled,
Was where the first ripe corn was milled;
We rubbed the ears on that hand-mill
Till meal was made the sieve to fill.
With supper made on new corn meal,
A sense of fulness we would feel;

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



WE RUBBED THE EARS ON THAT HAND-MILL.

Such wholesome mush made rich with cream,
Put us to sleep that knew no dream.

We changed the flax from seed to suit;
Made mits and cloth from wool of brute;
We changed the calf, the pig, the steer,
To meat and shoes and horses' gear.
'Twas not with steam, nor lightning's speed,
But hardened hands that did the deed.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



"NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP."

All worked like beavers for the home,
From early morn till night had come;
Then children all when prayers were said,
Soon fast asleep in trundle-bed.
Our speech and dress, they were not fine,
With fops and belles we could not shine,
But in such homes the men were reared
Who loved their land; their God they feared.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

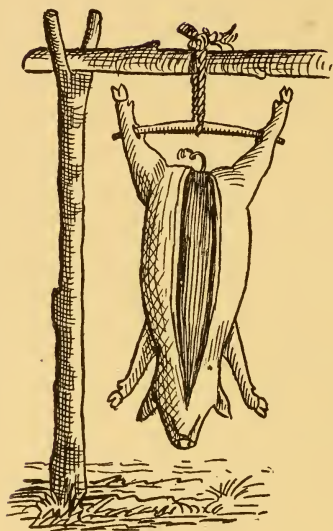
Two kinds of soap made in our yard,
The jelly sort and one kind hard.
With barrel staves a hopper made,
On this a coat of straw was laid;
This then was filled with ashes new,
And soaked with water through and through.
From hopper-drain the lye was caught,
And this was boiled in iron pot
Till strong enough to "strip the quill,"
Then soap-grease added, boiled until
The mixture reached the proper place
Where lye and grease lost every trace.
It must be stirred to be first class,
But stirred with stick of sassafras.
If you had seen the wat'ry eye
You might have asked: "What makes you
cry?"

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

The fact was plain, — no hearts were broke;
The March wind filled our eyes with smoke.

The pigs were penned, and fed until
Each one was fat enough to kill.
We watched the moon as well as swine,
And waited for the proper sign
When moon and pigs and all agreed,
For one day then we stopped their feed.
The neighbors' kettles all were brought
And filled with water, heated hot.
The pigs were shot or knocked on head,
And in the throat each one was bled.
At end of sled the barrel stood
In which the pigs were scalded good.
We drew them out, pulled off the hair,
We scraped them till the skin was bare.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



Entrails removed, when hung on pole,
Then meat was cut from foot to jowl.
The ham and shoulder and the side
Were salted down in barrels wide.
The heads, the feet, and all the rest
We used them all as we thought best.
Cracklings and sausage and head-cheese,
Each in its line was sure to please.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

Of course the bladders went to boys
To be blown up to make a noise.
The flourish at rear end of swine
We'd roast in ashes — my, how fine!
One name pig had the day before,
But now he has full twenty more.
'Twas pork, and lard, and sausage meat,
'Twas ham and souse, and bacon, sweet;

So on and on the names would pass,
Until they beat the widow Grass.
When salted well the meat was hung
In smokehouse made as tight as bung.
And smoke was made with hick'ry wood,
'Twas this that made the meat so good.
So now we had a good supply
All right for us to boil and fry.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



EACH AUNT HAD AN OLD-FASHIONED NAME.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

Each aunt had an old-fashioned name,
But yet we loved them just the same.
On father's side of our own house,
The first was dear Aunt Sally Strauss,
The next was big Aunt Polly Beer
Who came to see us once a year.
Aunt Peggy was the teacher's wife,
And grandma's pet led single life.

Aunt Betsy soon in churchyard laid,
Her little Cass then mother made.
On mother's side the names thus ran:
Aunt Liza, and Samantha Ann,
Aunt Rachel, too, who loved to smoke,
Was always ready for a joke.
We never could praise her too high
Because she gave us cake and pie.



ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

Aunt Nancy and her daughter Fan
Broke caste, and rode just like a man.

The social side of those past days
Was dif'rent far from present ways.
A visit then, not "lady's call,"
But team and dog and family all,
We shut up house and went away
By wagon load to spend the day.
The frolics then of many sorts
Were times of help as well as sports;
Corn husking and the quilting bee
Made neighbors all one family.
While men would husk and women sew,
The young were shot with Cupid's bow.
At close of day a feast was spread
Of roasted fowl and nice corn bread,

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ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



OH! DON'T YOU WISH AGAIN YOU MIGHT?

Of garden truck, all kinds of fruit,
Fresh spare ribs roast, browned just to suit,
Rich pies and cakes and biscuits hot,
Milk, tea and drips from coffee-pot.
I've feasted low and feasted high,
But ne'er like this since days gone by.

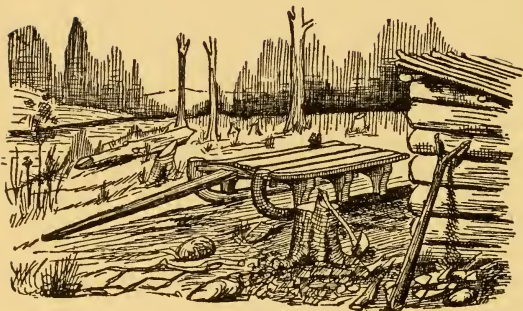
Oh, don't you wish again you might
Meet those young folks for just one night,

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

To play the old time games and sing,
And pare the apple, cut and string?
These strings of fruit in sun were dried,
But more fruit cut and laid aside
To cook in cider and boil down
To apple butter, rich and brown,
Which spread on fresh hot buckwheat cakes,
With sausage a fine breakfast makes.

If pig, or sheep, or calf were killed,
We started round with basket filled;
To all our friends we gave a share,
And when they killed they were as fair.
When garden seeds and shrubs would sprout,
Among the neighbors parcelled out,
The eggs of turkey, chicken, duck,
Exchanged to hatch and bring good luck.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



The spelling-school, the charm of all,
Lives only now in mem'ry's hall.
Each captain aimed to choose the best,
For in their choice was found the test.
The words pronounced, went to and fro,
When one would miss, then down he'd go.
The one who spelled all others down
Did then receive the victor's crown.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



The yards were filled with winter wood
For those who lived in widowhood.
If sickness came to rich or poor
Some anxious friend soon found your door.
Those friends strove hard to give relief,
When loved ones wept with speechless grief,
Or stood beside the open grave,
And love's last utterance sadly gave.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

I know that now 'tis counted best
To place in undertaker's chest
The dear ones just as soon as dead;
But somehow still 'tis in my head,
That sympathetic, good old way
Showed warmer feeling than to-day.

The simple life as here set forth
Has not been prized for what 'tis worth.
The nation's debt will not be paid
Till some tall polished shaft is made
To mark the deeds of pioneers
Who blazed the trail for future years.
Not few the battles fought and won
By victors yet to fame unknown.
Around fire-side, in wood and field,
The stubborn foe was forced to yield.

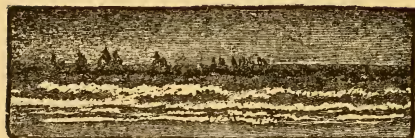
ECHOES OF LONG AGO



TILL LAID TO REST IN CHURCHYARD SQUARE.

Not few the burdens which they bore
But luxuries few in days of yore
Since mother nursed in rocking-chair,
Till laid to rest in churchyard square.
Of every pair the highest aim,
To give a child an honored name,
A unit for the home and state,
For, lacking this, naught else is great.

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.



SOME DWELL AFAR AT OCEAN'S SIDE.

Our Sundays were of days the best;
Not filled with cares, but times of rest.
At Hopewell church we'd sing and pray,
And have two sermons each Lord's Day.
Our catechism was learned by heart,
It taught us "choose the better part."

Near fifty years have gone since then;
We're far from that old home and glen;

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

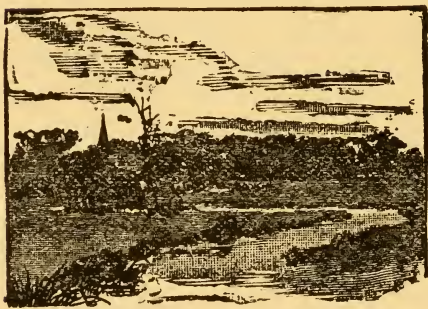
Our father sleeps beneath the sod,
His spirit rests in peace with God.
Dear mother lives, though dim in eyes, —
They soon shall meet beyond the skies.
Those little boys to men have grown,
And now are far from old hearth-stone.
Some make their homes in prairies wide;
Some dwell afar at ocean's side.

Some work at desk, the farm, some plow,
While one builds barns and houses now;
One in the legislative hall,
And one proclaims the Gospel's call.
The favorite one of all that home,
Was first to leave, though last to come;
The tenderest tie to brothers given
Was baby sister, now in heaven.

The sons of some the name extend, —
With some the family name will end.
Though each pursues a different task,
And each a different question asks.
In politics we don't agree,
Yet in one point alike we see,
The best our parents gave us there
Is sweetly told in this brief prayer:

ECHOES OF LONG AGO.

“Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.”



The End.

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